

*Hoping
For
Nothing*

THE MIRACLE OF THE
PRAIRIE BIRD INSTITUTE



F. E. L. FROM THE AIR—1945

HOPING FOR NOTHING

(The following article by Philip E. Howard, Jr., Editor of the *Sunday School Times*, was written at the request of William J. Jones, Editor of the *Young People's Paper* of the American Sunday School Union. It appeared in the September 2, 1945, issue of that paper and is reprinted here by the kind permission of Mr. Jones.)

On the prairies of western Canada, at Three Hills, Alberta, is a large and thriving Bible Institute of which many Christians in this country have never heard. Yet it is now in its twenty-third year, has sent out hundreds of graduates, and owns a large property on which it has constructed its own buildings.

In 1921 a young farmer, J. F. Kirk, heard a returned missionary speak in a little country schoolhouse near Three Hills. Kirk was moved to tears, and felt that God was calling him to study the Bible and to teach it to others. He started a Sunday School in a needy district, and gathered his kinsfolk for Bible study on Sunday afternoons.



THE SMALL TABERNACLE

The next year the Kirk clan invited L. E. Maxwell of Salina, Kansas, to come north and teach them. In spite of selagivings, he accepted the invitation, went to live in one of the Kirk farmhouses, and began to instruct eight teen-age young people. Thus was started the Prairie Bible Institute, of which Mr. Maxwell is today the principal.

Perhaps you have wondered why such a strange title has been given to this article. But you will understand as you read Principal Maxwell's testimony concerning the early days of the Institute:

"We were without precedent, without prestige, and without experience; but not without Job's comforters and 'many adversaries.' The local mockers wished we would build in the center of the village—that they might use the building for a dance hall—soon. We were 'appointed to death.' 'Without were lightings, within were fears.' But withal, there was one redeeming feature—we were almost too insignificant for contempt or persecution. Everywhere people 'suffer fools gladly.' ... Since those early days we have passed through many

and similar testings of faith and obedience. To walk in the light and keep pace with God occasions new quakings and fears. These are the growing pains of faith. ... Early in my ministry, while still the only teacher, I sought God as to the matter of salary. There was one definite word from the Lord, a word which has been basic to the work over these many years, a word without which this school never could have survived or prospered. It is found in Luke 6:35—just one little phrase of three words: 'Hoping for nothing.' ... A battle followed. I kept on praying, foolishly asking for a different word. But God did not change His mind. ... The upshot of this 'good seed' has been—what? ... The result of following God in this respect has meant a simplicity of Christian life among all our leaders. ... From this basic principle, the 'get' of fallen human nature has been largely supplanted by the 'give' of divine nature."

Having learned of the origin of this unusual Bible School, you will doubtless want to know more about the size of its

enrollment today, its buildings, its courses, and its doctrinal standards.

The Institute has more than a dozen large buildings as well as more than a dozen smaller ones, including five dormitories, high school, grade school, a small and a large tabernacle, powerhouse, laundry, barn, infirmary, a dozen houses for the faculty, one building containing classrooms, large dining-hall, kitchens, and bakery; a fine building containing office, library, book room and print shop, and a few smaller buildings including workshops, storerooms, and so forth. From the pleasant and well-lighted print shop comes the monthly, pocket-size magazine, *The Prairie Pastor and Over-comer*, edited by Mr. Maxwell. There are underground storerooms, out of reach of the below-zero temperatures of winter, well stocked with potatoes, beets, and jars of preserved fruits. The buildings are all steam heated from a central powerplant, and the pipes are laid in tunnels, electrically lighted, so that repairs may be easily made. Water must be brought in tank truck from a spring fourteen miles away, and the soft



DINING-HALL WITH CLASSROOMS ABOVE

coal is hauled from a nearby mine by students and workers. There is a farm with a hundred head of cattle, a slaughterhouse, and gardens for all the vegetables for the school. All the work needed to carry on this large establishment is done by the students and the staff of workers, all of whom are Christian people.

The Institute is co-educational. The present enrolment in the Bible School Department is about four hundred. The combined enrolment of the Grammar School and High School is about three hundred—two hundred and twenty in the High School and eighty-five in the Grammar School. The total number of the faculty is sixty, including twenty-four teachers and thirty-six other workers. The Institute is interdenominational, and supported wholly by voluntary contributions and the small amount paid annually by each student for room and board. The members of the faculty are not promised any salary, and they gladly serve the Institute on this basis. Donations are distributed among them from time to time, and they are given housing, light, heat, and food.

The Institute has a splendid department of music under the direction of Miss Katherine Anderson. She is ably assisted by the Rev. Dwight Malsbary and Mrs. Malsbary, formerly missionaries to Korea; and three others. There are courses of lessons in singing, piano and other instrumental music, and there is a large choir and an orchestra.

As many as twelve hundred to fifteen hundred people, including students and guests, gather at the annual Spring Conference. No charge is made for room and board, for Mr. Maxwell says that whenever he has thought of making a charge, those words have come to him: "Freely ye have received, freely give." He says that God has blessed this plan through the years.

About one-third of the graduates go to foreign mission fields. They are now serving in China, Africa, India, Iran, Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, South America, Alaska, Australia, Papua, and Central America. Needless to say, the Prairie Bible Institute stands firmly for the old faith, believing the whole Bible from cover to cover, and proclaiming salvation by faith

through the blood of Christ. The greatest desire of Mr Maxwell and the faculty is to see souls won to Christ, in this land or foreign countries, and to lead Christians into the reality of a life that is crucified with Christ and that is wholly devoted to God's glory.

During the summer many of the students take part in practical home mission work, such as that of the Canadian Sunday School Mission, among the Ukrainians and others in the isolated villages and farms of the immense sparsely-settled provinces of western Canada. The simple fare and hardy life during the cold winters at Three Hills, when the thermometer sometimes goes to fifty below zero, give the students a fine preparation for the roughest kind of missionary labour. As they learn by experience the great truth of being crucified with Christ, they lose the sense of privation and sacrifice in the endurance of physical hardship, as well as the fear of man, and go forth boldly to proclaim to unresponsive, indifferent, and antagonistic people the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Further Sketch of History

BY THE INSTITUTE PRINCIPAL.

When J. H. Porter, the Editor of the *Evangelical Christian*, was present at the Graduation Week and Missionary Convocation in the Spring of 43, he said:

"Three Hills is the last place on the world where one would expect to find a great flourishing Christian enterprise. Unless, of course, one remembers that the



warms of God are in the hearts of men, and in the desert and other strange places of the earth. He has sometimes tried His servants and wrought out there His eternal purposes. It is here on this place and far from the madding crowd that it has pleased God to establish the Three Hills Institute as a rebuke to faltering faith, lukewarm Christianity and modern skepticism.

1922 With a farmyard for a campus, and an abandoned farmhouse for a building the first little classes of the Prairie Bible Institute began in the fall of 1922. God's beginnings are small. He has not despised the day of small things. It is still part of God's plan to plant a little seed and from that very inconspicuousness confound the splendid wisdom of the wise and prudent.

Those first classes closed in the spring with a joyous and tearful missionary pledge-offering of \$2000.00 from a half dozen poor families. The student body grew the next year to twenty-three all of whom lived in near-by homes. Then we faced a problem. The little old house would suffice no longer. To build or not to build became the burning question. But whoever heard of such a thing? A Bible School in a country district? What folly and presumption? To our knowledge it had never been done. It was a new thing. It was different. The path was untrodden. It was all so "contrary to nature." We naturally want to see where we are going. But the obedience of faith never



THE DINING HALL.

became real until it ventured forth where it cannot understand. God must take us out beyond the apparent and the reasonable.

1924 After months of united prayer we began to build. The devil reminded us of the man who began to build and was not able to finish. Luke 14 29-30. But in spite of the devil's darts, and in the face of many naggings and fears and tremblings, we launched forth. In the spring of 1924 our building site was a bald, treeless prairie on the edge of a small Alberta village of about 500 people the very name of which, "Three Hills" (Chinese name) 'Who would go to Three Hills that place outside the camp of the plausible' must have been chosen of God to have us reckoned among the nondescript. 'Can any good thing come out of 'Three Hills' " But as a saint of old has well said. Let any man be any outlandish nondescript the world may choose to denigrate him but still let him be nondescript. Ah, yes, that is the Divine secret. But we cannot content ourselves to remain just nondescript. We do disdain the company of the unwritten and the unrec-

ness. But "better a thousand times effective peculiarly than ineffective ordinariness" (D. M. Thornton). God still takes "things which are not to bring to naught things that are. And ours has been the holy and happy privilege to be among the "are nots. . . are not in location. . . are not in reputation. Blessed be nothing."

How cheering in the face of such misgivings, are the words from God to another who founded a similar work:

"Are you prepared to perish with life to be counted a fool and worse than a fool by your own world, your missionary world, your Bible Believing world?" May I deal with every shred of your reputation just as I choose and will you be a saint?" Are you willing to obey in everything every time everywhere?"

We cannot improve upon Christ's way. His method assures success. Again, it is the corn of wheat falling into the ground, buried, isolated, and alone and out of sight.

Goal From those days of bare beginnings this Institute has grown to have many departments, but only one goal, viz.

sending the Gospel to all the world. Such an ambition must remain forever central. We would gladly continue to have as our reputation that which was once heaped upon us as reproach. They just make missionaries at F.B.I."

We believe that since the heathen world presents the most difficult missionary front, it ought to have the very best lives, and the most thoroughly trained. It is our supreme task therefore whether in the High School or the Bible School department, to prepare trained, schooled, disciplined, and vigorous people to "make up the hedge and to stand in the gap" on the far-flung missionary fronts. This unfinished task we are called out to accomplish and to complete. In the language of our beloved Sovereign, King George VI we say, "in this missionary war we are all on the front lines the Front is everywhere."

A school of this kind especially a school that increases so much faster than its number of supporters is nearly always in financial straits. Be it said, however, to the glory of God, that we refuse to go into debt.

THE BOOKING ROOM



And our hearts are being cheered continually by new and interested stewards who are alert for heavenly investment and reward. Givers with spiritual vision and discrimination recognize in this the scriptural method of multiplication and increase. A host of harvesters will win thousands in a very few years, whereas a single worker can scarcely win hundreds in a lifetime.

Way of Growth In order to make possible and promote such a program of evangelism and missions, God led us from the outset by the way of unselfish service and sacrifice, i.e., "Hoping for nothing" for self. The quotations of Mr. Howard in the previous article make it plain how God led us in this unique path. A well-known Bible School principal said to us: "I am not sure, Brother Maxwell, that we would be able to get teachers for our school if we did not pay them a salary." To which we replied: "Oh, we are delivered from many teachers who might want to come to us for a salary." And the fact is that we have more offers from teachers than we can accept. We rejoice with Hudson

Taylor that God's work done in God's way will never lack God's support. But we hesitate to agree also with Hudson Taylor that God's work done in God's way will never lack God's grace. For the Prairie Bible Institute a perhaps as much of an operation in the Bible School world as was the China Inland Mission is in beginning in the missionary world. Hear that noble pioneer!

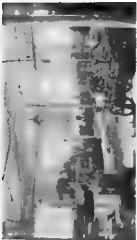
Enclosed by enemies despised by many hated perhaps by others an operation on what have become established rules of mission practice. His and The great Schoolmaster working a thanksgiving company together and with few experienced helpers often persecuted, scorned and embarrassed by a curriculum which for some time had been evaluated by the conviction that the work was His and that He was with me in the thick of the fight. I must have fainted and broken down. But the battle is the Lord's and He will conquer. We may fail in a contest today but He never fails.

Such words strike home to our hearts. They are our experience. We have been there in days past have been there often, just as there now. As we write there are

perplexities and embarrassing circumstances. Our path is still untried. Does the reader ask, "What are your plans?" Do you still intend to build? How much larger will you grow? How will the money be provided? Dear friends we do not know. We are still following. Who would have us be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Or limit the Holy One of Israel. We cannot begin to supply the trained young people demanded by the best missionary agencies. Over two hundred of our students have reaped thousands of souls in the regions beyond. But what are they among so many? What of the unloved, unprotected unsaved millions? The seeds are white unto harvest.

But we are as sure today as the day we began that tests and trials will be greater than ever. The conflict will center again and again around the principle of "give or get." And each reader faces the same choice day by day. Christian progress always centers around some new application of the Cross. Our life whether personal or institutional, must be cast again and again into the mould of the Cross.

THE PRINTING DEPARTMENT



There is no gain but by a loss,
You cannot save but by a cross.
The corn of wheat, to multiply
Must fall into the ground and die
Wherever you ripe be do behold,
Waving to God their sheaves of gold,
Be sure some corn of wheat has died,
Some soul has there been crucified
Someone has wrestled, wept and prayed,
And fought hell's legions undamaged.

We build each year build without debt
build simple frame buildings build only
the necessary buildings—build to 'serve'
as King David 'our own generation by the
will of God.'

To the eternal praise of our loving Father
let it be said that in the midst of ma-
givings and handicaps and in spite of
failures many we seem to have expanded
more and more through a kind of holy
carelessness about any consequences to
ourselves. Of course there have been aches
and pains and heartbreaks. It will always
be so. If 'the Cross is the attraction.' True
obedience is never a light matter. It is
costly. It will ever be so. 'There is no
promise of ease to the heart that is set on

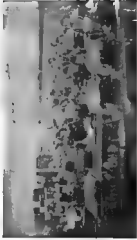
following the Crucified. But there is withal a heavenly romance attached to God's "new thing" as we witness Him pouring "new wine into new skins, putting 'new songs' into our hearts, filling our eyes with wonder and "our mouths with laughter" and best of all, filling and filling our students with messages for dying men.

After recounting the above we can only say again "What hath God wrought?" "Concerning all this what have you?" "A vine of God's planting." "A man with \$1,000,000 could not have done it -he would have been a fool to try it. Such a work in such a way in such a place." It "is not after man." Only God could have done it. Friends, speakers and visitors like the Queen of Sheba all agree. "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. After his visit to the Prairie Bible Institute the editor of the Evangelical Christian said

"The school is an amazing revelation to anyone brought up in traditional ecclesiasticism and shackled and hedged around by the rules and regulations of most denom-

inations. It would be an excellent thing if some of the members of our orthodox denominations could see a work of this kind. Their fossilized spirits might be stung broad-awake could they see God at work out here on the vast expanse of our western prairies, moulding and fashioning young lives into instruments of divine usefulness for the furtherance of His cause and kingdom.

Whoever perceives in these principles the path of God's blessing and usefulness, and whoever loves his God and souls more than he loves the things beneath the sun to every such soul we say, Brethren, pray for us!



A CLASS IN TYPING

Vital to Prospective Students

This is an Institute including Grade School High School and Bible School. At present only the children of resident parents can be admitted to the Grade School. Our Grade School is inspected by the Provincial Department of Education.

Our High School is not merely secular although it does provide a complete curriculum in regular academic and commercial subjects. This course is offered as a means of furthering the training of those preparing for Christian service. The Bible is included as a regular subject in the High School all classes are opened with prayer and all studies English Language, History, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Typing, shorthand, Book-keeping and Music are entered upon as reflecting the glories of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The staff rejoices that many of the pupils graduating from our High School are coming right back to enroll in the Bible School. The fires of missionary zeal

THE OFFICE



is called in the High School turned forth into
Barns as these young lives as they pursue
the Bible Theological missionary course

The method of Bible Teaching employed
at the Institute is absolutely unique, both
in its character and in its results. Of this
method of using 'Guide Questions' to
direct the pupil into his own findings in the
Scriptures, the late Dr C. I. Scofield said,

It works. Through this method the Instit-
ute avoids turning out the mushroom or
copied type of product for the student
comes to find the Bible to be an open Book,
his own and all his own

Thorough training in other related and
important subjects is given, including four
years each of History (Ancient Medieval,
Church, Modern) and of English three
years each of Personal Evangelism and of
Doctrine two years each of Homiletics and
of Bible Geography and one year each of
Public Speaking General Biblical Introduc-
tion, Christian Experience, Scriptural Refuta-
tion of Modernism and False Cults Sunday
School Teaching and Church Supervision.
Good training is also offered in Music,



Abstract

including conducting, theory, voice, and instruments. Thus, whether a student is led of God to become a missionary or a pastor upon completion of the Bible Institute course he will, under the Holy Spirit, be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Institute provides good board at the very lowest possible price. Three Hills is in the center of a quiet rural and rich agricultural area. With its own gardens, milk herd, and a quarter section of farm land, the Institute is able to provide an abundance of good food on an unusually low budget. These advantages are passed entirely on to the student. This low rate can largely be accounted for because of our unalarmed, regular staff members.

The cost of board and room for the pupil is only \$3.00 per week. The Bible School student needs but about \$180.00 Canadian to cover the entire cost of board and room, laundry and registration fees for the school year six months in length, beginning in October and ending in April. The High School student's expenses for the longer eight-month term, including the same items

would not exceed \$320.00 Canadian. These charges do not include the cost of books. Extra reasonably-low fees are charged for typing classes, and private lessons in voice or on musical instruments. In view of rising prices we may be forced to raise our charges another year!



Born Crucified

By L. E. MAXWELL

A well-known Deputation Secretary writes as follows:

"I want to say that your book has been such a blessing to so many of us that we are ordering 300 of them and sending them out to Africa to our missionaries, that every one of them may have a copy of it on the field. There is a great need today for the deepening of our spiritual life."

Can be ordered in U.S.A. from Moody Press (\$2.00), or in Canada from Prairie Bible Institute Book Room (\$2.00).

Prairie Overcomer



This vital monthly paper setting forth current topics, the message of Christian Victory and Missionary vision, has a growing circulation. Subscription, voluntary contribution.

SCHOOL CALENDAR—1948-49

High School Registration Day	September 23, 1948
Bible School Registration Day	October 1, 1948
Missionary and Graduation Week	April 3-10, 1949
Baccalaureate Service	April 3, 1949
Bible School Graduation Exercises	April 3, 1949
High School Graduation Week	June 19-22, 1949
High School Graduation Exercises	June 22, 1949



CURRENT

The present attendance is about 1140 students in the three departments of the work. Foreign missionaries from the Prairie Bible Institute now number about 385. This is not to mention the many, perhaps hundreds, working in the home lands. These workers at home and abroad are winning scores of thousands to Christ.

A brief summary of information for students will be found on page 25. A Catalogue setting forth our Courses of Study and other vital material will be sent to any address.

Address Communications to Secretary, Prairie Bible Institute

*Order extra copies
from
PRAIRIE BIBLE INSTITUTE
Three HMs, Alberta*